

## **Assisting Students Who Have Been Bullied: Support for Teachers**

Tina J. Herring, Ph.D.  
Metropolitan State University of Denver

Tami Urbanek, M.A, M.P.A.  
Universal Education Foundation 501 (c) (3)

- What is bullying?

### **According to [stopbullying.gov](http://stopbullying.gov):**

- Bullying is unwanted aggressive behavior.
- Criteria common to most definitions of bullying
  - distress
  - repetition
  - intention to harm
  - power inequity (Goldsmid & Howie, 2014).
- Imbalance of power
  - Social Justice Issue
    - Children learn about oppression and intolerance of differences before they learn of the societal issues (Polanin & Vera, 2013)
- Types of bullying
- Verbal Bullying
  - Teasing/taunting
  - Name calling
  - Inappropriate sexual comments
  - Threats
- Social Bullying
  - Harming someone's reputation or relationships.
- Physical Bullying
  - Harming a person's body and/or possessions
- Cyberbullying
  - Bullying that takes place over digital devices

**(stopbullying.gov)**

*Discussion: What types of bullying do you tend to witness in your classroom?*

- Frequency of bullying
- The National Center for Education Statistics indicates that, nationwide, about 22% of students ages 12 – 18 experience bullying.
  - Most of these statistics focus on school related bullying, but bullying can also occur outside of school, in the community, work or at home.
  - These statistics are very similar to the CDC report that indicated that 19% of students in grades 9 – 12 report being bullied at school.
  - Students who receive special educational services are twice as likely to be bullied as students who are typically developing.
  - The percentage of children who are two or more races who report being bullied is higher than children who are White, Black or Asian.
  - According to National Youth Association, 9 out of 10 LGBT students are bullied.
- Children more likely to be bullied
- Are perceived as different from their peers
- Are perceived as weak or unable to defend themselves
- Are depressed, anxious, or have low self esteem
- Are less popular than others and have few friends
- Perceived as socially awkward
- Minority within the group

*Discussion: What other characteristics that you would add to this list from your own experience in the classroom?*

- Signs a child is being bullied
- Look for changes in the child. However, be aware that not all children who are bullied exhibit warning signs.
- Some signs that may point to a bullying problem (stopbullying.gov):
  - Unexplainable injuries (this can also signal abuse at home)
  - Changes in eating habits, like suddenly skipping meals or binge eating. Kids may come home from school hungry because they did not eat lunch.
  - Difficulty sleeping or frequent nightmares

- Declining grades, loss of interest in schoolwork, or not wanting to go to school
- Feelings of helplessness or decreased self esteem
- Self-destructive behaviors such as running away from home, harming themselves, or talking about suicide

*Discussion: What are some other signs that you've seen in your classroom?*

- Fear of cafeterias: Cafeteriophobia
- The consequences of bullying
- Depression and anxiety
- Low self esteem
- Self-harm
- Social withdraw
- Poor academic performance
- Victimization
  - Sexual perpetrators report that they look for passive, quiet, troubled, lonely children from single parent or broken homes (Darkness to Light, Risk Factors)
  - Human Trafficking

Take note that this list is very similar to the list of children who are more likely to be bullied.

- Creating that vicious cycle of self abuse
- The consequences of bullying
- These effects can be long-lasting. The risk is greater if the bullying is significant and last over a long period of time, also if the victim lacks adequate social support (Rigby, 2003).
- Olweus (1992) found that boys who had been victimized during middle school were more depressed and had more negative self-concepts a decade later as young adults.

*Discussion: What have you observed as consequences or effects of bullying, either in students you have worked with or your own personal experiences?*

- Who are these children who are bullied?
- Bullies selectively direct their attacks toward a minority of peers who serve **consistently in the role of victim** (Olweus,1978; Perry, Kusel, & Perry, 1988).
- Personal, peer and family relationships affect the probability of children being bullied by their peers (Perry, Ernest, Hodges & Egan, 2001).

- Children with disabilities (Hartley, Bauman, Nixon, & Davis, 2014).
- Children who are socially isolated/segregated (Hartley, Bauman, Nixon, & Davis, 2014).
- Children who are in minority groups (race, language, gender, sexual orientation) (Polanin & Vera, 2013)

*Discussion: What are some common characteristics that you have identified, regarding students who are more likely to be bullied within your school or classroom?*

- What do teachers typically do when they observe or know about bullying?
- Burger, Strohmeier, Sprober, Bauman, & Rigby (2015) surveyed the use of intervention strategies teachers would use in a hypothetical bullying episode:
- In order of preference:
  - **Authority based interventions (about 80%)**
  - Working with the bully (non-punitive alternative)
  - Enlisting the help of other adults (parents, counselors, administration)
  - Working with the victims (least popular intervention)
- Many teachers were unsure of whether or how to work with victims of bullying.
- About 60% of the respondents reported that they would apply authority-based interventions toward the bullies without addressing the needs of the victims.

*Discussion: Why do you think teachers are unsure of how to work with the victims of bullying?*

*Which intervention strategies do you tend to use when you notice bullying in your classroom? How do you address the needs of the victims?*

- What do we do about the bullies?
- [The School Bully](#)

*Discussion: How have you addressed the needs of a child who is a bully?*

- The Universal Education Foundation and Bullying Recovery Program
- The Bullying Recovery Project is offered at no cost to the participants, through the Universal Education Foundation, 501 (c) (3), based in Colorado Springs, Colorado.
- UEF was founded by Hossca Harrison in 1986.
  - The UEF provides an opportunity for children, adolescents, adults, and family units to explore non-traditional healing techniques and attend educational classes in a non-judgmental atmosphere.
- About our program

- Identification of bullying
- Understand personal history
- Cycles/effects of bullying/abuse
- Influences self-perception
- Concept of self-compassion and how to practice it
- Courage to be different and an individual in a world that does not value individuality
- Overcoming shame
- Nurturing talents
- Teach self-acceptance
- What we learned

Participants have reported:

- Having a limited perception of what bullying was and how it impacted them on an emotional level (especially bullying from teachers or other adults)
- Being able to identify depth of their emotional pain regarding bullying and how their experiences with bullying has influenced other parts of their life, including life choices
- Many struggled with the idea of self compassion/self acceptance

We needed much more time and the support of the adults working with the participants on a regular basis

- **What research tells us works regarding working with the victims of bullying**
- Assertive responding during confrontations with bullies tend to discourage attacks as opposed to aggressive fighting (Perry, Ernest, Hodges & Egan, 2001).
- Adults within schools need to be invested in their students and take a proactive interest in engaging all students in the learning community (Brewer, Brewer & Kulik, 2018)
- Contact Hypothesis: intergroup contact under appropriate conditions can effectively reduce prejudice between majority and minority group members (Schaefer, 2015)
- **What research tells us works regarding working with the victims of bullying**
  - Make you classroom a safe place.
  - Discuss effective communication skills (age-appropriate). Many children and adults don't know how to effectively communicate. We live in the digital age of more screen time than face time.

- Cooperative learning activities such as Jigsaw
- Activities and lessons that increase knowledge and understanding about differences.
- Taking about differences, bringing it out in the open.
  - Ignorance breeds contempt
  
- **What research tells us works regarding working with the victims of bullying**
- Social and physical integration of children who are considered minorities (race, gender, sexual orientation, ability) (Hartley, Bauman, Nixon & Davis, 2015).
- Teaching strategies such as Universal Design for Learning (Hartley, Bauman, Nixon & Davis, 2015).

*Discussion: What do you do in your classroom (or suggest to regular education teachers) to increase integration of students who may be considered a minority, primarily students with a disability?*

- Bullying scenarios
- Get into pairs or groups of three.
- Read your scenario in the group.
- Discuss what you would do as a teacher.

For a copy of this presentation please email:

Tina Herring at [therring@msudenver.edu](mailto:therring@msudenver.edu)